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REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS OF LITERATURE

Studies in Humanism. F. C. S. SCHILLER. London: Macmillan & Co. Pp. xvii + 492.

Whatever may turn out to be the ultimate fate of the pragmatist movement, of its fruitfulness and stimulating power there can by this time be little question. It is compelling us all to sit up and take notice; and while one may regard the judgment that it is an undertaking in some ways 'the most stupendous in the history of thought' as a bit over-enthusiastic, it can hardly fail to leave a permanent impress upon the philosophical attitude. It is needless to say that Mr. Schiller's book, if one can avoid the prejudices not unlikely to be aroused by his polemical mannerisms, possesses to the full this power of suggestiveness; indeed, it raises so many questions, and throws so many novel lights, that the writer of a short review is impressed with a sense of helplessness in knowing how to deal with it. It may be said that Mr. Schiller's tone has mellowed a little in this last volume. He can indeed hardly be called sympathetic at any time toward opponents; and he is still on occasion too free with such phrases as 'gratuitously absurd,' 'silly quibbles,' 'sheer prejudice' and the like. Still on the whole the book, though hard hitting, depends upon serious and candid argument; and it endeavors, plainly, to present the issues squarely and without concealment. So that it probably is, up to the present, the most complete and unambiguous utterance of the school, and reveals most fully alike its motives and its tendencies.

What, as I should interpret it, would seem to be the thing which Mr. Schiller is most anxious to maintain, is the genuine importance to the constitution of reality of our human action, and of the thinking which makes it possible and effective. For us, truth and reality in the fullest sense are not fixed foundations, but ends to be achieved (p. 432). Nothing is absolutely settled. Human operations are real experiments, with a reality that really responds; reality is still in the making (p. 218). Back of all our thinking lies the practical and moral postulate that things as they are can be remade and *made perfect*, and that to us as human agents the task belongs (p. 450). To this practical end truth or knowledge is subservient. It is a fact of human life primarily, to be understood by the part it plays in life. Pragmatism is, then, the conscious application to epistemology of a teleological psychology (p. 12). Man is not made to contemplate ideas, but ideas are made for man and by man, to serve the ends of action (p. 44). The attainment of wisdom is not a matter of idle speculation, but of altering reality, within oneself and without (p. 36). By the creative power of belief is meant, therefore, primarily, the fact that belief is a real force in the world through its connection with activity. It is not mere knowing that changes things, for the reason that there is no such thing as *mere* knowing; knowing is always part of a process which sooner or later issues in action (p. 440). 'Practical' means simply that which serves directly or indirectly to control events; and the subordination of theory to practise stands at bottom for

the fact that all experience is essentially *active* (p. 130). So, too, the application to experience is necessary as the test and guarantee of truth. Until we have applied it, we can not be sure that we really understand things. Truth is a claim whose value can not be decided by mere inspection; experience is needed to show whether it is good or not.

It is in the light of this attitude that we may interpret, primarily at least, the objects of Mr. Schiller's aversion. 'Absolute' stands for a pre-existing ideal already attained, and so existing 'immutable and *a priori* in a supercelestial world, and descending magically into a passively recipient soul'—an ideal divorced from life, since this is always a *striving toward* completeness, and therefore unable to help out in any way our actual limitations and growth in knowledge. The 'independence' of reality means 'independence of human purposes,' 'intrinsically unrelated to our life,' 'that which can not be known or related to us.' And 'correspondence,' again, means something which excludes being 'efficacious.'

So far I do not see how Mr. Schiller's thesis can very well be objected to. There is such a thing as growing human truth; and it is all that we at least possess. The 'psychology' of truth is a matter well worth attention: it is important in itself, it must form the basis for any possible account of the world of knowledge, and its implications for a general philosophical attitude are bound to be highly significant. The philosophical deficiencies of an intellectualistic and academic attitude Mr. Schiller does not, in my opinion, exaggerate. But after all, for many of us, the special interest lies in what comes after. To what does it all lead? I can only indicate a few points, without arguing them, where I can not feel so confident of Mr. Schiller's position.

Mr. Schiller himself, to begin with, draws very sharply the distinction at issue. It is affirmed that pragmatism as such does not attempt, and never has attempted, to be a metaphysics, but only an account of human knowing. Of course, many of the criticisms have been on the supposition that it did pretend also to be a metaphysics. It has been among the metaphysicians, rather than the psychologists, that its chief opponents have been found; and as confessedly nothing but psychology, it is likely to lose something of its interest. Nor does it seem to me clear, either, that Mr. Schiller is wholly free from responsibility for the mistaken interpretation. If we allow this distinction between 'truth' and 'reality' at all—a distinction which pragmatism as a metaphysics would deny—it will be well to keep it very clearly before us. But Mr. Schiller is continually blurring the distinction. To be sure, he usually introduces some qualifying phrase, such as 'our conception of reality,' 'our acceptance of reality,' reality 'for us' or 'for our knowledge' (cf. pp. 186, 194, 425). But these are easily overlooked; and in any case I venture to think that the average reader will find it hard to avoid the impression that what he is saying about 'reality' is not intended as mere 'psychology,' but is somehow significant for a final statement. In another way, something of the same feeling of uncertainty is lent by Mr. Schiller's expressed attitude toward metaphysics. It is a luxury, which really doesn't amount to very much. It is merely personal; one may amuse himself after this fashion

if he sees fit, or, if he please, may eschew it altogether; and he need not, indeed he ought not, to expect other people to agree with him. I can not make quite clear to myself just what this attitude means. If it is only that Mr. Schiller is more specially interested in working out a psychology of the knowledge process, and does not care to bother with other problems, he has of course the same right as any one to restrict his field; but the fact is of no great philosophical importance. Clearly, however, the judgment is intended to be more objective than this; and as such it appears to me to hint at least at a position of unstable equilibrium. If there actually is reality beyond us that we can know, by what right are we to proclaim that it doesn't make much difference what we think about it? The contrary would seem at least as likely. And if, on the other hand, there is a continual insistence upon the purely personal and supererogatory character of any metaphysics, the natural thing to do would seem to be to take a step farther, to recognize that these constructions of reality are merely human and instrumental, and so to accept either the unknowableness, or the entirely unmeaning character, of a reality beyond. But this is of course itself a metaphysics. And my point is, simply, that without a conscious metaphysics it is impossible to judge pragmatism; it can not stay mere psychology without abating the most of its apparent claims.

Now the feeling I get from Mr. Schiller is, to repeat, this: that in spite of the distinction he draws he has so strong a leaning toward making the psychological explanation all-inclusive, as to lead him into not infrequent ambiguities. There is no space to examine all the passages I have in mind;¹ but I may come back for a moment to the 'making of reality.' If the pragmatist would be content to say that knowledge, directly or indirectly, *alters* reality, so that without it the world would not be the same world, I do not think he would find much opposition.² But his whole mode of expression, at least to the unwary reader, has tended to keep the other side from view. I imagine that of the three main modes of altering reality to which Mr. Schiller appeals, none would be seriously denied, taken by itself. Knowledge alters reality by leading to action. It alters us who possess it, and our views. And it may, as a belief, become a motive which alters the feeling and behavior of other

¹ Compare, *e. g.*, the meaning of the term 'relative' as opposed to 'independent' reality. This may mean either that the reality is not unrelated to our interests, or that it is actually only a functional distinction within our knowledge. This last is what Mr. Schiller's statements seem to me most naturally to point to; but such an interpretation would mean declaring for a metaphysical pragmatism. Compare, *e. g.*, pp. 183, 461, 482.

² In a recent story, where the hero is claiming the omnipotence of thought, it is argued against him that there are some things which can not be *thought* out of existence; a man can not think himself out of a cell. To which it is replied that a man can so apply his brain and ingenuity that he can leave a cell, which is the same thing. Substituting creation for annihilation, this is the answer that Mr. Schiller now gives. But it may be said not unfairly that it is a quite different meaning that the first statement taken strictly would seem to have, and that if the second was really meant all along it would have been better to have said so and thus prevented misunderstanding.

conscious beings apart from action of ours (pp. 438-439). But in all these cases, certainly in the first, there is nothing inconsistent with an object of knowledge which we did not make, but, rather, this is implied. The second case may be regarded as irrelevant. And even in the third, which seems to me the only plausible instance of a real making of reality by sheer belief, it may be pointed out, first, that it only involves, again, a change in an object already existing, and so partly independent of us; and second, that to furnish the most effective motive is not to believe credulously that a person *is* what in point of fact he is not, but, recognizing his present reality, to believe that he has the power of *becoming* otherwise—a situation which admits everything that the ordinary upholder of ‘independence’ would claim. To put it in another way, we may make a distinction between the altering of *reality*, which all would grant, and the making of the *particular* reality to which the knowledge intends to refer, at the time when it so intends. It is instances of this last which the pragmatist finds it hard to give without abandoning the ordinary man’s point of view altogether, and identifying frankly the growth of our knowledge with the world process. And my point is, again, not that Mr. Schiller does not recognize the other side, but that he seems to recognize it grudgingly, that he certainly gives an impression that the aspect which he emphasizes is the only important one, and that sometimes, even, he speaks in a way that appears to be inconsistent with there being any other side. So, for example, I have found no passage in which he does not, apparently, deny the validity of the ‘correspondence’ idea altogether in knowledge. But the denial of the correspondence idea would seem to mean, definitely, that there is no reality beyond, and so to convert the theory to a metaphysical pragmatism. If such reality, unmade by us, exists for our knowledge, there is just as much necessity for the notion of correspondence as in the idealisms and realisms wherein he finds it a fatal flaw. It may be that Mr. Schiller has in mind to speak only of correspondence as a practical test of truth, and in that case he is, I think, right. Correspondence is not a *test* of truth; belief in it is one *result* of the knowledge process,—an object of faith, which involves, however, the satisfaction of a real human interest. But if this is his only meaning, his mode of expression is at any rate misleading.

Perhaps it may be said that the criticism of ambiguity ignores the fact that Mr. Schiller does, before he finishes, definitely turn to metaphysics, and pronounce in some measure upon it. As a matter of fact, the metaphysics seems to me calculated not so much to complete as to reverse the impression which the bulk of the volume tends to make. Still the correction must of course be accepted; and the light which it throws upon pragmatism deserves a good deal more attention than can be given to it here. The treatment is slight, and is to be found notably in the last two essays. I will merely call attention to two points in particular which it has suggested.

And, for one thing, I find evidence here of the same uncertainty of which I have complained in the treatment of knowledge, and which has left me in the end without the definite standpoint which it seems to me

one has to have to make any final estimate of pragmatism. What I mean may perhaps be illustrated by the treatment of naïve realism. What are we really to think about the 'independence' of the external world? The question is central for the metaphysical status of pragmatism. I at least should grant that the belief arose first as a postulate. As such, furthermore, it is open to an abstract doubt; it may conceivably be reversed.* But this is true of any belief; the question is, whether, according to our present best judgment, we really are to believe it as it stands, or whether we are as philosophers to take it merely as a methodological construction, *i. e.*, to deny it, and make pragmatism a metaphysics. At one point Mr. Schiller would seem to grant that it is justified, not only as practically advantageous, but as really sound in the 'correspondence to reality' sense (p. 201). But no sooner has one begun to feel fairly settled on the point than he is straightway unsettled again. In the very ingenious 'dream' argument, in the last essay, the doubt is raised once more, and the independence and reality of the world are called in question in the interests of a higher world of religion. In spite of Mr. Schiller's disclaimer, it seems to me that this issues naturally in a metaphysics which denies 'independence.' If this world is unreal, why may we not have the same reason for holding *any* world unreal? The answer is that we only judge a world unreal in the light of a completer experience. But the more an experience grows in harmony, the less, if I understand Mr. Schiller's argument, will it render 'independence' possible, since it is only because there are things we refuse to stand for, and which we want to change, that we postulate independence in any case. But then a completely harmonious experience would apparently have to be solipsistic, since it would have no motive for the recognition of anything other than its own reality (pp. 470 ff., *cf.* p. 321); while any particular reality up to this point could equally with the present world be condemned as unreal, because of its incompleteness.

There is, however, another statement of his realistic position which appears to me more clear. For on occasion Mr. Schiller turns pretty definitely to a panpsychism, which accounts for the reality which we do not make in terms of other beings and their creations, perhaps even of 'one or more beings' of predominant power and creative ability. I do not quite see the connection of this with the treatment of realism just referred to, but it can, I suppose, be regarded as authoritative; and it may lead to the final remarks I have to make.

And I may call attention to the fact that here Mr. Schiller for the first time allows value to a motive which has sometimes been in dispute in the pragmatist controversy. This is what may be called in a certain sense the theoretical value in knowledge. The most definite statement of the motives which may lead the pragmatist to panpsychism is perhaps this: that such a theory is an attempt to 'make the human and the

*Mr. Schiller seems sometimes to imply that this abstract possibility of reversal is equivalent to the recognition of the purely instrumental character of belief. But a recognition that our conceptions of reality may change need not take all value from our present confidence in a real validity and 'correspondence.'

cosmic more akin, and to bring them closer to us that we may act upon them more successfully' (p. 443, *cf.* preceding statements). It may be noted that there are really two motives here which might well be more sharply distinguished. The last is the practical motive in the narrow sense, in terms solely of some future change which knowledge enables us to make. But this surely would not be pressed. How a panpsychic interpretation of the external world, how, *e. g.*, Mr. Schiller's fancy that 'catalytic action' suggests a situation in which two chemical elements which are unacquainted have to be introduced by a third, and then like each other so well that they leave *C* out in the cold, could possibly give effectiveness to our practical dealings with things, would be hard to imagine. What value of any sort, indeed, it can be supposed to have sufficient to lead a pragmatist to entertain it seriously, one finds difficulty in seeing. And the suspicion naturally suggests itself that Mr. Schiller's previous disparagement of metaphysics may have been due to a sense of the slight practical value really attaching to the particular metaphysics which he individually affects. But in any case, it is worth observing that what is left as the only plausible motive for such a metaphysics—if we leave out the mere desire to understand which is apparently unpragmatic—implies the attitude which elsewhere is depreciated. The desire to feel our 'kinship' with the world, to have any real meaning, must assign a value to the conception of an 'independent' reality, not simply as it can be changed in the future, but in its present existence also; and to the idea of a 'correspondence' between that reality and our knowledge of it. The admission of such a motive might well, it seems to me, alter somewhat the emphasis in the pragmatic argument.

But now there is a further motive which also, and perhaps most fundamentally, comes into question through the entire book. And that is the narrowly intellectual and rational one. The significance of this Mr. Schiller consistently denies in his attack on absolutism. I have no space to consider the merits of the question, and, to speak frankly, I have not a settled opinion about the way it ought finally to be estimated. But at least I can not feel that the underlying interests, in attempting to serve which absolutism gets its hold, are so wholly futile, so 'gratuitously absurd,' as Mr. Schiller would have us believe. It is not the whole philosophical motive; and if it finds no place for the truth which the pragmatists urge, I believe that it is both practically and theoretically unsatisfying. But if there could be found a way of reconciling this truth with that wholeness of things of which philosophy has commonly been in search, it would certainly give an added satisfaction. And Mr. Schiller's final and most definite metaphysical suggestion is well calculated to bring out the difficulty. After allowing the possible existence of other beings back of the world of nature, Mr. Schiller finds a way of giving a final metaphysical meaning to the 'making of reality,' by suggesting that the reality which we are led to regard as not made by us, was nevertheless made after the same fashion that we create reality, but made by these other beings. But then we seem to be led to a primitive reality altogether vague and inchoate, out of which all the definiteness

and unity of the universe have gradually evolved, a primitive matter which is not merely a methodological postulate of epistemology, but a real metaphysical existence.⁴ Now I do not say that a thoroughgoing evolutionism is impossible. I only maintain that there is a certain aspect of irrationality to it which is a severe strain on the ordinary philosophical understanding. And this Mr. Schiller seems to admit. For his answer is simply to tell us that we are not concerned with what things were or how they came to be, with understanding them, in other words; but only with the practical question of what we can make out of them in the future. Now I can readily conceive that I might be brought to a state of mind in which I should be forced to put up with what seemed to me theoretical absurdities for lack of any solution; and then I should doubtless accept as good practical advice the admonition to turn to affairs of conduct. Indeed, in any case I should willingly admit that this last is the finally important matter. But also, constituted as at present I find myself, I am bound to feel that a philosophy which bids me stop trying to make things intelligible, and sink the demand for rationality in the practical concerns of action, is only a second best, and that it leaves me with a genuine impulse unsatisfied. And so long as the pragmatist can see in the demand nothing but 'sheer prejudice,' the war is likely to go merrily on, with but remote chance of either side convincing the other.

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JOURNALS AND NEW BOOKS

ANNALEN DER NATURPHILOSOPHIE. April, 1907, Band VI., Heft I. *Das nächste Problem der Chemie* (pp. 1-15): F. WALD. - The article is taken up, if we except the polemical matter which it contains, with a discussion of the variability of solid phases. The author scores Arrhenius for applying the Dalton laws (definite multiple and equivalent proportions) to crystalline solids, while dismissing without comment, 'because they rarely occur,' solid solutions to which the laws do not apply. He considers the atomistic idea, which is of course founded on the Dalton laws, as merely a special case of a more general law, and accuses it of being the cause of lax methods of thought and a hindrance to the solution of such problems as he presents. He takes up in connection with solid solutions isomorphism, composition of minerals, semi-permeable membranes, water containing crystalline salts, and 'impurities,' in the discussion of the absorption by solids. In processes of purification we are really separating phase forms, until at last we come to what he calls *Eckpunkten*-forms of constant composition; and to these alone do the atomic laws apply. Prevailing theories concern themselves only with these 'edge-points,' and not with the other phase forms. Since elements

⁴The shifting between these two interpretations seems to me another instance of the wavering attitude toward the final implications of pragmatism of which I spoke at the start. Cf. pp. 432 ff.